

STATEMENT FROM THE WESTFORD SELECT BOARD, TOWN MANAGER, CHIEF OF POLICE and FIRE CHIEF,  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE AND SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

The Westford Select Board, Town Manager Jodi Ross, Police Chief Tom McEnaney, Deputy Police Chief Mark Chambers, Fire Chief Joe Targ, Westford School Committee and Superintendent Bill Olsen condemn the actions of the Minneapolis Police officers which resulted in the death of George Floyd. We wish to take appropriate steps to share current policy and engage in a broad community discussion in this important area.

We were deeply troubled at witnessing the atrocious acts of those officers involved in George Floyd's death. We continue to work hard to make Westford a welcoming place of inclusion and safety, and this work remains the highest priority and should reflect who we are as a community. The actions of the police officers involved in the death of George Floyd do not reflect the value we place on human life in the Town of Westford.

As public servants, it is our responsibility to continue to speak out against discrimination, racism, xenophobia, bullying and hatred. It is our responsibility to foster a community that is inclusive and anti-racist, where all voices are heard, protected and respected. Being anti-racist goes beyond the absence of overt acts of racism and discrimination. Anti-racism requires that we actively recognize and change the ways in which our systems and structures, our policies and practices, our attitudes and our history have harmed, and continue to harm, our neighbors, our friends, and our families.

The methods used by police in Minneapolis that killed George Floyd are not part of any police training program in Massachusetts, including those used by members of the Westford Police Department. The Westford Police Department believes in treating all, including those accused of committing a crime, fairly and with dignity. Officers are trained only to use the amount of force necessary to ensure safety for the suspect, the officers, and the civilians in the area.

Additionally, the Westford Police Department has long been at the forefront of progressively training its officers. This includes extensive training in crisis intervention management, mental health awareness, de-escalation procedures, supervisory practices and professional standards. The Westford Police Department is an accredited agency with the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission and has adopted program standards that are considered best practices, administratively and operationally. The Department also continuously evaluates the standards to which it holds itself accountable and is committed to achieving excellence in community policing.

Westford Fire Rescue EMS shares the values of Westford Police and together are representative of a collective effort to provide all public safety services in a fair and equitable manner. Westford Fire Rescue EMS continues to review its training and culture regarding diversity and inclusion, as well as the effectiveness of that training.

We understand that our community members of color experience racism in Westford. As we have heard in recent rallies, protests, and community conversations, incidents of racism have occurred and continue to occur in Westford in our neighborhoods, in public spaces, in our schools and on our school buses, and in routine interactions throughout our town. Eliminating racism, xenophobia, bullying and hatred will take conversation, education, and training in our public and community institutions.

Westford Schools recognize the critical role the schools play in combating racism, xenophobia, bullying and hatred and are committed to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for all students and staff. We recognize that change is not the responsibility of one person, or one group. Change is systemic, and it requires recognizing and acknowledging the areas of needed improvement, and collectively working to address them. As a school system, we are committed to addressing racism, diversity, and inclusion through our policies and practices, our curriculum, and our professional development.

Together all of us commit to:

- Releasing a summary of key Westford Police policies and training related to use of force, de-escalation and other relevant areas (key documents are available at <https://westfordma.gov/304/Police-Department>)
- Releasing a description of data related to race in Westford Police interactions with the public, explanation of how this data is reviewed, and the retraining or other actions taken if patterns that may suggest racial bias are observed
- Developing a proposal for ongoing community engagement with Westford Police to ensure we are engaging in best practices in these critical areas
- Engaging town leadership in a broader community conversation (currently planned for July 7<sup>th</sup>) and establishing a confidential method for community members to report incidents that may involve racism xenophobia, bullying, hatred or other forms of discrimination
- Providing a description of the Westford School Department's policies and training plans for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for the 2020-2021 school year
- Listening to the community. If any resident has had an experience which is inconsistent with the values expressed in this statement, we encourage you to reach out to any town official or member of the above named boards, so that we can listen, understand and strive to better address your needs and concerns.

We will always condemn the words and actions that drive us apart as a community. We look forward to beginning the work that continues to build public trust and draws us closer as a community, emphasizing and prioritizing acceptance and equitable treatment for all.